

REMARKS

With the above amendments, claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 8-15, 17, and 18 remain in prosecution and stand rejected. Claim 16 has been canceled in this response.

Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested in light of the following reasons.

Substance of Examiner Interview

The Examiner and the undersigned conducted a telephone interview on December 5, 2007 regarding the rejection of claim 1 in the last office action. The undersigned thanks the Examiner for taking time out of his busy schedule to conduct the interview.

The undersigned explained to the Examiner that the Yamada reference does not disclose a topmost metallic layer comprising Tin. In Yamada, the layer 205 may comprise copper, but not tin. The Examiner advised the undersigned to put this argument in writing for reconsideration. No agreement was reached.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

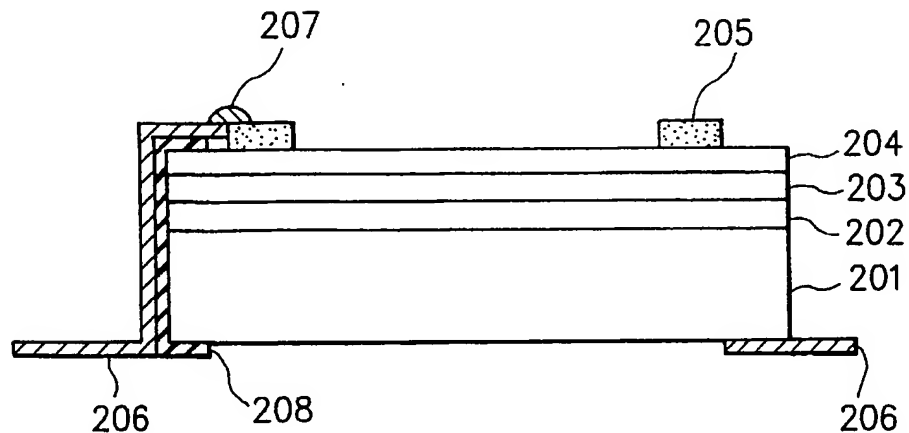
Claims 1, 3, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,053,083 to Sinton ("Sinton") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,650,019 to Yamada et al. ("Yamada") and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,378,270 to Brasch ("Brasch"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Sinton, Yamada, and Brasch at least for requiring the topmost metallic layer to comprise tin and to provide a solderable metallic surface. As noted in the last office action, Sinton does not disclose electrode layers comprising copper and a topmost metallic layer comprising tin. Brasch does not add to the combination in this regard.

The last office action suggests that Yamada discloses a solar cell module having an electrode layer comprising copper (205) and a conductive substrate (204) comprising

tin, citing to Yamada col. 7, line 22 to col. 8, line 3. Yamada FIG. 2, which is relevant to the cited portion of Yamada, is reproduced below for ease of discussion.

FIG. 2



In Yamada, the topmost metallic layer 205 is copper, not tin as required by claim 1. Furthermore, the conductive layer 204 comprises tin but does not provide a solderable metallic surface for electrically coupling the solar cell to an external electrical circuit. In Yamada, the solder 207 is formed on the layer 205 of copper. That is, it is the layer 205 of copper, not the conductive layer 204 of tin, that provides a surface for the solder 207 to allow connection of the solar cell to external circuits (Yamada, col. 8, lines 19-22).

For at least the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentable over the cited combination even before the present amendment.

To expedite prosecution, claim 1 has been amended to clarify the backside of the solar cell relative to the front side and to recite a second layer between the topmost metallic layer and the first layer of copper. This is significant as the topmost metallic layer of tin protects the second layer during the etching of the first layer. It is respectfully submitted that such an etching step performed on the recited structure is not taught or suggested in the prior art.

Independent claims 13 and 15 are similarly patentable over the combination of Sinton, Yamada, and Brasch. Claims 3, 8, 11, and 18 are patentable over the

combination of Sinton, Yamada, and Brasch at least for depending on patentable base claims.

Claims 4-7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 17 stand rejected as being unpatentable over various combinations that include Sinton, Yamada, and Brasch as primary references. These claims are patentable at least for depending on base claims that are patentable over Sinton, Yamada, and Brasch.

Conclusion

For at least the above reasons, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejection of claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 8-15, 17, and 18. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (408)436-2112 for any questions.

Respectfully submitted,
Douglas H. Rose, et al.

Dated: 12/7/2007

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